

South Dakota National Guard

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SD named most outstanding flying unit in Air National Guard

By Senior Master Sgt. Nancy Ausland
SDNG Public Affairs Office

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. - The South Dakota Air National Guard's 114th Fighter Wing was presented the Spaatz Trophy at the 2014 National Guard Association of the United States conference in Chicago, Illinois, Aug. 25.

The Spaatz Trophy is presented to the most outstanding flying unit in the Air National Guard each year. This is the fourth time the 114th Fighter Wing has won the prestigious award; the last time was in 1988.

Selection is based on overall combat readiness and the unit's performance with respect to all other Air National Guard flying units. Factors included in the evaluation are flying safety, aircraft operation readiness, weapons firing, unit alerts, unit manning, skill level qualifications, retention, drill attendance, operational readiness inspections, outstanding accomplishments and special missions and exercises.

Throughout 2013, the 114th Fighter Wing deployed 220 Airmen to six countries providing Aerospace Expeditionary Forces to support global operations. Training and operational deployments included Red Flag, Silver Flag, Operation Noble Eagle and Operation Enduring Freedom.

The 114th Fighter Wing participated in a joint naval threat exercise with the Naval Air Warfare Center in California and New Mexico, as well as Jaded Strike Exercise working with Special Operations Forces in Arizona. More than 75percent of current unit members have actively supported deployed overseas contingency operations since 9/11.

This past year also saw the 114th Fighter Wing support a deployed Aerospace Control Alert mission assuring 24/7 homeland defense alert protection with aircraft and personnel.

The 114th Fighter Wing was evaluated by the Air Force during this period as well. The unit received an Environmental, Safety and Occupational Health Inspection and the Joint Staff Integrated Vulnerability Assessment, and the pilots received a Standardization/Evaluation inspection.

Members of the 114th Fighter Wing demonstrated continued support to their communities and state through volunteer and mentoring efforts in local schools, support of STARBASE youth programs to

increase skills in Math, Science and Technology, assistance with the distribution of school supplies in Project SOS, serving meals at the “Banquet” and countless individual hours volunteering in various community activities.

“What our Airmen accomplished this last year is truly remarkable, as 2013 may go down as one of the most challenging years in unit history,” said Col. Russ Walz, 114th Fighter Wing commander. “Three training deployments, overseas operational deployments with Airmen in six different countries, and three major inspections from the Air Force in one year is an amazing effort from all the ‘Fighting Lobos’. And it occurred in a year where we experienced a government shutdown and budget shortfalls that forced furloughs of our full-time force.”

Walz said the unselfish contributions of the men and women of the 114th Fighter Wing embody the ‘service before self’ core value.

“It’s appropriate that their outstanding accomplishments are acknowledged by winning the highest award given to an Air National Guard unit,” said Walz. “I’m extremely proud to be their commander.”

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High resolution photos are available at www.flickr.com/southdakotationalguard



140825-Z-ZZ999-001: U.S. Air Force Brig. Gen. Matthew Jamison, second from left, assistant adjutant general for the S.D. Air National Guard, and Col. Russ Walz, second from right, 114th Fighter Wing commander, accept the Spaatz Trophy on behalf of the 114th Fighter Wing during the National Guard Association of the United States General Conference in Chicago, Illinois, Aug. 25, 2014. The Spaatz Trophy is presented to the overall outstanding flying unit in the Air National Guard each year. Presenting the trophy are, from left, Lt. Gen. Stanley E. Clarke III, director of the Air National Guard, and right, Maj. Gen. Donald Dunbar, former NGAUS vice chair for Air and the adjutant general of the Wisconsin National Guard. (Photo by Tunwa Yee /Released)

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